



# The STEWARD

North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation  
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Michael F. Easley  
 Governor

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William G. Ross Jr.  
 Secretary, DENR

## LEWIS LEDFORD NEW PARKS DIRECTOR

Lewis R. Ledford, who joined the state parks system in 1976 as a ranger, has been named as the new director of the Division of Parks and Recreation.

In accepting the appointment, Ledford become the first person to rise from entry-level ranger rank to lead the division. During his 27-year career, Ledford has served in a variety of park management capacities, including park superintendent at Mount Mitchell State Park, followed by 16 years as west district

superintendent. He became superintendent of state parks in 2000 and had been acting director since January, when Phil McKnelly retired from the post.

"Throughout his career, Lewis has been instrumental in developing important partnerships with a variety of groups, including conservation organiza-



tions and other government agencies at the local, state and federal levels," Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Bill Ross said. "His experience with the division and his knowledge about its issues will serve him well in his new role."

As director, Ledford will oversee the division responsible for managing the state parks system of 29 state parks, four state recreation areas, 17 state natural areas, seven state lakes and the

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 5*

## MAYO RIVER PARK IDEA DRAWS CROWD

The idea of a state park along the Mayo River in Rockingham County sparked intense interest in that community during a public meeting in Mayodan March 30.

Sue Regier, natural resources manager for the Division of Parks and Recreation, and a nearby map of the park study area were surrounded three-deep most of the evening by Rockingham County residents, all of them craving details about the division's proposal.

Many were understandably wary, anxious to know how their farms and homes might be affected once land acquisition efforts begin.

"We believe the Mayo River State Park will have a very positive impact on the area and the state.



*STAFFERS SUE REGIER AND SUSAN TILLOTSON, CENTER, ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT MAYO RIVER PLAN.*

Our question is: will the park impact the River's Edge subdivision?" Pam and Steve Richards, who live in the subdivision, asked on a comment sheet supplied by division staff.

Others offered less guarded support.

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**FOR STATE PARK INFO AND EVENTS**

**Department of Environment and Natural Resources**

"I am 100 percent in favor of the Mayo park. We certainly need the area for recreation and canoeing. I hope this long-time dream can come into being in the near future," wrote Bob Carter of Reidsville.

Earlier this year, the General Assembly reacted to that type of enthusiastic support by authorizing the Mayo River as a unit of the state parks system. That action allows the division to develop a land acquisition strategy.

Spurred by the Dan River Basin Association, Rockingham County, all its municipalities and many civic groups endorsed the idea in the hope of luring tourism into an economy rocked by the loss of manufacturing jobs.

Coincidentally, the divi-

sion identified the Mayo River corridor as a site worthy of state park status, being rich in scenic, geologic and biological resources. It was one of 13 potential park sites listed in the division's New Parks for a New Century Initiative. (A similar proposal for a park along the Haw River in southern Rockingham and northern Guilford counties was unveiled to the public in October.)

"We're at the point where we'd like to explain to people in the local community how a new state park is created and to include them as partners in the planning process," said Carol Tingley, the division's chief of planning and natural resources.

The public meeting near Mayodan was seen as a way to introduce the concept. About 300

area landowners were invited as elected officials, and 232 people registered during the 2 1/2-hour event.

A drop-in-anytime format allowed the residents to ask questions as they viewed exhibits and maps of the study area, which includes a 12-mile section of the river's corridor from the North Carolina-Virginia border south to just above Mayodan.

A dozen division staffers, including rangers and park superintendents, fielded questions, not only about the Mayo River proposal but about the parks system and its programs in general.

The division has also posted a website devoted to the project at [www.ncsparks.net/mayoriver](http://www.ncsparks.net/mayoriver). The site explains the land acquisition process and offers a "Frequently Asked Questions" section.

Much remains to be decided about how the park will develop, and any timetable for development hinges primarily on the pace of land acquisition.

Division staff have said that roughly 2,000 acres would be a suitable size for a river-based state park in the Rockingham County terrain, and the model for its development could resemble any one of a number of other river-based parks.

State parks such as those on the New River and Lumber River are composed of relatively small "pods" of land along the corridors. Eno River State Park, in contrast, contains much riverfront property in long, narrow strips.

Still others, such as Raven Rock on the Cape Fear and Cliffs of the Neuse on the Neuse, are largely within river corridors but are basically single expanses of land.

## From The Director's Desk

It's easy enough to be overwhelmed by the challenges of moving from the superintendent of state parks to director of the division. But, there is also an overwhelming sense of gratitude — to those who've entrusted this job to me, to my colleagues who have offered support, and perhaps most of all, to retired director Phil McKnelly.

Phil's legacy was truly one of leadership as he guided the state parks system through some of the most amazing changes in its 88-year history. Through it all, he carried the same sense of purpose and devotion to mission that characterized so many of his predecessors.

In this division certainly, all of us stand squarely on the shoulders of those who've gone on before. Any success we have will be due, in large part, to their hard work.

But also, standing on their shoulders allows us to reach a bit higher. A sense of responsibility should take hold here and push us all to build a parks system that's not only great in our eyes but in theirs as well. In coming months, we'll need to start looking for ways to fulfill that responsibility. That's the true challenge, and I hope you'll accept it with me.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford

# O'NEAL, LAMBERT GET NEW POSITIONS

James Adrian O'Neal, formerly superintendent of Lake Waccamaw State Park, has been promoted to east district superintendent. And, Mike Lambert, formerly a ranger at three mountain state parks, has been promoted to superintendent of the new Elk Knob State Natural Area.

O'Neal replaces William E. Berry who retired in February. As one of four district superintendents, he will be responsible for resource management, environmental education programming, law enforcement, safety and facility maintenance for eight state parks in North Carolina's coastal region.

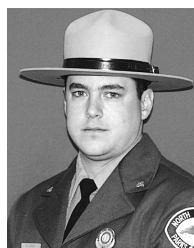
In making the announcement, Lewis Ledford, division director, said, "First as a ranger and as a park superintendent, Adrian has been known by his peers and park supporters for his youthful energy and enthusiasm as well as his competence. He has been very active in helping to raise professional standards in the state parks system in such areas as environmental education and law enforcement training, and he will be a valuable asset to our management team."

O'Neal is a native of Dunn and a graduate of Triton High School in Erwin. He graduated from North Carolina State University in 1993 with a bachelor's degree in parks, recreation and tourism management. Throughout college, he worked as a volunteer and seasonal ranger at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area and Mount Mitchell State Park.

He began his fulltime career with the division as a Ranger I at Cliffs of the Neuse State Park. He later served as a Ranger II and a Ranger III at Carolina Beach State Park before being named



O'NEAL



LAMBERT

superintendent of Lake Waccamaw State Park in April, 2003.

He is a certified environmental educator and current chairman of the division's Interpretation and Education Council. He is also a certified CPR instructor, firearms instructor and prescribed fire burn boss.

O'Neal said, "Any position that I have, I go into with the idea that I can learn something from it. The east district has some longtime superintendents with great experience as well as younger ones who have new ideas to share. That kind of mix is important for the parks system as we move forward."

O'Neal, his wife Melissa and children Alex, 3, and Lauren, 5, will live in Wayne County near the division's east district office.

Lambert and a ranger yet to be selected are expected to begin staffing the natural area within a few weeks.

"We're very pleased to be able to post a staff to this natural area which has tremendous potential as an active unit of the state parks system," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division. "As an Ashe County native and a veteran of the parks in that region, Mike is an excellent choice to direct Elk Knob through this transition period as we form a citizens park advisory committee and develop a management plan."

The 1,237-acre natural area rises to the second highest peak in Watauga County at 5,520

feet. The land northeast of Boone was purchased in partnership with The Nature Conservancy in September, 2002 and subsequently deeded to the parks system.

Elk Knob was considered one of the most desirable areas for preservation from among more than 70 sites examined by a division task force in 2001-02. The mountain contains the headwaters of the North Fork of New River, and is part of a chain of amphibolite rock mountains in Watauga and Ashe counties, ranging to Mount Jefferson. The system of peaks offers nutrient-rich conditions often supporting rare plant species and natural communities.

"This is a good opportunity to protect what is a very diverse natural area unique to northwestern North Carolina," Lambert said. "It's an area that can serve as an example of what we can accomplish in terms of preservation when the park system partners with private landowners and land trusts."

Lambert is a graduate of Ashe County High School and the University of North Carolina-Charlotte with a bachelor's degree in earth science.

He began his career with the parks system in 1993 as a Ranger I at New River State Park and later served at Mount Jefferson State Natural Area. In 1999, he became the first ranger appointed to the new Gorges State Park in Transylvania, giving him valuable experience working in a new state park unit. In June, 2003, Lambert was promoted to a Ranger III position at Stone Mountain State Park in Wilkes County.

Among Lambert's duties will be to begin developing a general management plan.

# PARTF ADDS \$4.74 MILLION FOR PARKS

The NC Parks and Recreation Authority authorized the expenditure of an additional \$4.74 million this year for state parks capital improvements and land acquisition at a May 19 meeting in Elizabeth City.

In October, the authority had authorized \$17.74 million for the state parks based on projected revenues to the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund in 2003-04. Actual revenues have been higher than expected, and a change in accounting methods produced a one-time revenue bonus, according to the trust fund staff.

Added to that, a 2003 change in state law directed that \$5 from the sale of each personalized license plate be put into the trust fund. Early projections have placed that estimated revenue at \$1 million a year.

The total projected revenue for the trust fund for 2003-04 is now \$35.8 million. That will include \$10.42 million to be set aside for recreation projects by towns and counties. The authority is set

to consider applications from local governments at its May meeting in Raleigh.

The latest allocation to state parks will fund five land acquisition projects.

Those projects include: two vacant tracts adjacent to Jockey's Ridge State Park; 33 acres in the watershed of Lake Norman State Park; three small tracts to be added to Hanging Rock State Park; tracts along the upper Scuppernon River to be added to Pettigrew State Park; and, tracts on the Toxaway River to be added to Gorges State Park.

Funding for the Pettigrew and Gorges state park projects will also be sought from the Natural Heritage Trust Fund and the Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

Funding of \$3.3 million was also authorized for four capital projects: utility improvements at Kerr Lake State Recreation Area; office expansion at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area; Chalk Banks facilities at Lumber River State Park; and dock facilities at Hammocks Beach State Park.

## SEMINAR GIVES MECHANICS VALUED SKILLS

For its first training seminar in four years, the state parks system's Maintenance Council talked a retailer into donating a pile of old power equipment for a small engine repair class. Some of it hadn't been used for more than 10 years and was a breath away from a junkyard.

But under the tutelage of instructor Robert Manring, the maintenance mechanics restored about 80 percent of it that's now being used in the parks.

There was something for all skill levels in the seminar held at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area and Cape Fear Community College with 46 maintenance mechanics from throughout the system attending classes in carpentry and welding as well as small engine repair.

Jerry Howerton, the division's new chief of maintenance, said the courses were targeted toward skills useful in keeping the parks running.

"It's very important to keep a well-trained work force due to an ever-changing work environment," Howerton said. "Our maintenance staff must be multi-task individuals, and that requires a constant need for training and information on new equipment and maintenance processes."

Howerton said the council hired Manning because of his experience conducting seminars in the 1990s through Wake Technical Community College for employees in the north and south districts.



*ROBERT MANRING, LEFT, INSTRUCTS KENNY MCGRADY AND OTHERS IN ENGINE REPAIR CLASS.*

The renovated equipment that went into the parks was a bonus from that decision, he said.

In carpentry classes, employees were put to work building park display cases. The welding seminar was broad-based with detailed instruction on equipment and on numerous techniques.

The seminar was suspended for three years due to budget reductions and restrictions on travel, but it's at those times – when employees are asked to do more with less – that training is crucial, Howerton said.

"I believe this was one of the best seminars yet. I'd like to thank the division and department management for seeing the need for this type of training," he said.

# RAVENS & 'BIG BIRD' SHARE AIRSPACE

The ravens that normally wheel and dart about the pinnacle at Pilot Mountain State Park have been keeping their eyes on a much bigger bird this spring.

A National Guard UH60L Blackhawk helicopter spent weeks hovering about the mountain, making more than 250 deliveries of trail-building material for a rehabilitation project on the park's famed Jomeokee Trail that encircles the pinnacle.

The chopper prompted dozens of phone calls and visitors stopping by to ask about the project and watch the work from the park's lower reaches. But, the nesting ravens got a close-up view.

"It was rather intriguing to watch the interaction of the ravens and the helicopter," said Park Superintendent Andy Whitaker. "There were times when the ravens were observed playing in the downwash of the helicopter – that's 80-90 mile-per-hour winds."

Although construction crews, National Guard airmen and park staff hustled to get most of the airlift completed before the early March nesting season, Whitaker said that all the commotion didn't seem to faze the birds.

The National Guard unit based in Salisbury flew for 13 days, sometimes in turbulent weather, to hoist 1,000 tons of quarried stone slabs and 500 tons of ground sandstone to a series of 10 landing sites on the circular trail. Barrels holding sandstone or pallets of slabs, each weighing up to two tons, were threaded to the landing sites with a 120-foot cable.

Workers of the contractor, The Unturned Stone of Mars Hill, then wrestled the material by hand along the trail.

The process did away with the need for heavy construction equipment in the delicate environment of the summit, and with the Guard volunteering its services, saved the division as much as \$250,000. About 2,900 linear feet of the trail will be rehabilitated during the six-month effort. The \$429,130 project is funded by the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

The 75-year-old Jomeokee Trail predates the park, had never been reconstructed and as a result, was heavily eroded and surrounded by a network of bushwhacked spurs, Whitaker said.

The Unturned Stone (then as a subcontractor) and the National Guard teamed on a similar project in 2002 when the trail to Hidden Falls and Window Falls at Hanging Rock State Park was rebuilt. The Guard transported 65 tons of rock on that project and reported it was excellent training for their crews who regularly are called to airlift heavy military equipment, such as Humvees.

During the Pilot Mountain project, the Guard rotated crews to give as many airmen the experience as possible.

Whitaker also gives high marks to The Unturned Stone, also involved in rebuilding the 100-yard Little Pinnacle Overlook Trail last year. That path leading to a



*BLACKHAWK HOVERS NEAR PILOT MOUNTAIN.*

vantage point to view the pinnacle also predated the park by decades. Whitaker said The Unturned Stone workers, the majority of them female, strive to give the rehabilitated trails a very natural look.

"You just wouldn't recognize the place now, it's so much better. These are really hardworking folks doing a tremendous job," he said.

## LEDFORD CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

state trails and rivers systems.

"Lew has served the division with distinction for many years, and in each of his positions, he has performed over and above the expectations for the job," McKnelly said. "He has served on most of the committees the division has created, often as a charter member responsible for helping establishing the constitution or bylaws for the group. Lewis has also drafted or helped draft a number of the division's staff directives and guidelines. He has always looked for better, more effective ways of getting a job done and will be in a position to continue these efforts in his expanded leadership role."

A native of Mitchell County, Ledford has a bachelor's degree in biology/education from Appalachian State University. He resides in Raleigh.

He began his career as a seasonal ranger at Mount Mitchell State Park while still a college student. Upon graduation, he worked for one year as a ranger at William B. Umstead State Park before returning to Mount Mitchell, where he served 6 1/2 years as superintendent.

During his tenure as district superintendent, Ledford played a key role in establishing citizens advisory committees for each of the state parks and also spearheaded efforts to repair and reopen parks damaged by a series of hurricanes. He also helped to install a program of environmental education certification for all rangers.

He is a graduate of the Natural Resources Leadership Institute at NC State University, the state's public manager program and received the Governor's Award for Volunteerism. He has been an active member of the Association of Southeastern State Park Directors, and serves on the board of directors for the North Carolina Recreation and Parks Society.

# MOUNT MITCHELL...BECAUSE IT'S THERE

(EDITOR'S NOTE: THE FOLLOWING IS A FIRST-PERSON ACCOUNT OF RUNNING IN THE MOUNT MITCHELL 40-MILE CHALLENGE, A SEVEN-YEAR-OLD EVENT CREATED BY THE PARK STAFF AND BLACK MOUNTAIN RESIDENT AND NC PARKS AND RECREATION AUTHORITY MEMBER WENDLL BEGLEY.)

By LARRY HYDE, Ranger  
Lake Norman State Park

To paraphrase a common saying, "You don't have to be crazy to run here, but it helps."

As a charter member of the "Brotherhood of the Idiots," a name given to a group of Stanly County runners who braved a cold Saturday before Christmas to run from the Stanly County YMCA to the top of Morrow Mountain and back, being crazy about running is a given.

As I told many curious friends who, when they noticed the weather patterns, were more worried about my life than my sanity, I wasn't so worried about the 40 miles of running as I was about the ice, snow and other treats that Mother Nature would throw my way. Of course I'm referring to the annual Mount Mitchell 40 Mile Challenge, and the 26 Mile Black Mountain Marathon (also known as the "fun run").

The race began Feb. 28 in the Town of Black Mountain, wound its way into Montreat, and then went straight through the woods for miles of uphill single track and old roadbed trails filled with rocks, snow, ice and creeks. The marathoners turned around 13.1 miles from the start where the trail crosses the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The serious runners who decide a marathon is not enough then proceed by road and trail to the very summit in Mount Mitchell State Park, the highest point in the eastern United States



*HYDE BEGINS THE 'CHALLENGE.'*

at 6,684 feet. Once the summit is claimed, runners go back down the mountain to the starting point.

Forty-mile participants have a limit of 11 hours. No support is allowed outside of nine aid stations on the course. In past years runners have brought snowshoes to help them make the trip, only to find out that snowshoes don't work very well on dry trails and roads.

Weatherwise, this was the year that race organizers had always hoped for. The race application warns potential runners that the route goes up a mountain that receives more than 200 inches of snow in some years. With this January's snow and ice and the constant cold temperatures, this appeared to be the year that Mother Nature would punish us.

Many runners who had trained on the course earlier were injured and had to pull out. (In a training run at Morrow Mountain State Park after the January snow/ice storm, I took a fall on top of the mountain and nearly broke my leg. I learned a lot of lessons that day about running/sliding on ice.)

Mother Nature appeared

to be making matters worse with the snowfall we received on Thursday before the race. Many thought that the race would be cancelled, but of course it wasn't. It turned out to be a beautiful Saturday as the race began at 7 a.m. The temperature was 23 degrees but the forecast was for lots of sun and about 50 degrees by afternoon.

The run to the top had plenty of snow, as much as a foot near the summit. However, this fresh snow turned out to be a blessing on the way up as the snow gave better footing than the ice hidden below. I found my way to the summit in four hours, 15 minutes and felt pretty good about the run down.

Runners had to descend by road until reaching the parkway. Once I got to that point I discovered what happens to a snowy trail after 135 trail runners have run it both ways and the sun has had its chance to shine.

Footing was almost impossible as we sloshed, slipped and skidded for the next 13 miles. At this point, ice or snow would have been a godsend. I made it to the finish at seven hours, 47 minutes. I never fell, but due to the downhill adventures, I will lose one toenail and my left knee feels pain I may never recover from.

You may ask, "Was it worth it?" Of course it was! Once you have completed a feat like this, there aren't many other challenges that can worry you.

Even if I didn't work for the state parks, I would still say that the staff at Mount Mitchell did an outstanding job of clearing the roads and making runners feel as welcome and comfortable as one can feel when running 40 miles. The race organizers did an outstanding job as well.

# NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS MONTHLY ATTENDANCE REPORT 2004

PARK	% CHANGE (2003/2004)					
	FEB. 2004	TOTAL YTD FEB. 2004	FEB. 2003	TOTAL YTD FEB. 2003	FEB.	YTD
CAROLINA BEACH	9,744	18,861	12,362	22,370	-21%	-16%
CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE	5,127	9,847	3,669	7,929	40%	24%
CROWDER'S MOUNTAIN	18,879	42,427	9,852	27,137	92%	56%
ENO RIVER	17,710	36,365	12,264	24,325	44%	49%
OCCONEECHEE MOUNTAIN	2,348	4,378	0	0	0%	0%
FALLS LAKE	15,118	26,751	15,771	22,089	-4%	21%
FORT FISHER	33,210	63,210	32,820	55,021	1%	15%
FORT MACON	43,218	87,734	37,790	77,712	14%	13%
GOOSE CREEK	9,309	19,018	7,179	16,427	30%	16%
GORGES	3,442	7,060	2,973	6,895	16%	2%
HAMMOCKS BEACH	5,508	11,052	8,787	16,674	-37%	-34%
HANGING ROCK	9,862	19,421	8,734	18,100	13%	7%
JOCKEY'S RIDGE	15,957	35,422	43,611	104,683	-63%	-66%
JONES LAKE	4,492	8,672	4,276	9,360	5%	-7%
JORDAN LAKE	9,340	23,248	8,886	19,034	5%	22%
KERR LAKE	38,476	70,468	39,620	76,424	-3%	-8%
LAKE JAMES	8,637	13,979	6,955	13,612	24%	3%
LAKE NORMAN	22,392	46,491	11,176	11,926	100%	290%
LAKE WACCAMAW	2,594	6,148	4,696	9,384	-45%	-34%
LUMBER RIVER	3,935	8,105	3,390	5,050	16%	60%
MEDOC MOUNTAIN	2,836	5,075	0	0	0%	0%
MERCHANT'S MILLPOND	8,043	12,279	2,852	5,423	182%	126%
MORROW MOUNTAIN	23,200	30,760	11,676	22,956	99%	34%
MOUNT JEFFERSON	3,688	8,799	4,544	11,963	-19%	-26%
MOUNT MITCHELL	4,778	10,872	2,317	5,755	106%	89%
NEW RIVER	4,052	9,253	4,836	12,988	-16%	-29%
PETTIGREW	2,923	5,645	5,286	10,365	-45%	-46%
PILOT MOUNTAIN	18,805	35,174	13,115	26,646	43%	32%
RAVEN ROCK	5,966	11,857	4,192	9,395	42%	26%
SINGLETERY LAKE	481	831	525	1,178	-8%	-29%
SOUTH MOUNTAINS	7,910	16,318	6,480	12,980	22%	26%
STONE MOUNTAIN	22,768	38,368	13,324	20,856	71%	84%
WEYMOUTH WOODS	3,481	6,929	1,940	4,391	79%	58%
WILLIAM B. UMSTEAD	26,285	55,215	14,740	24,263	78%	128%
<b>SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL</b>	<b>414,514</b>	<b>806,032</b>	<b>360,638</b>	<b>713,311</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>13%</b>



# Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation is:

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;

to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;

*and*

to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources

for all citizens and visitors of North Carolina.

## ***SAFETY ZONE***

### **Follow the rules Of the road**

- ✓ Know your driving ABC's: Always Be Careful.
- ✓ Avoid speeding; it increases your chances of not arriving at all.
- ✓ Pay attention: inattentive driving is dangerous, no matter the reason, including the use of cell phones.
- ✓ Expect other drivers to do the unexpected.
- ✓ Avoid being a victim of road rage; allow irate drivers to pass.
- ✓ Be sure everyone in your vehicle buckles up.



### *The Steward*

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